

# EXHIBIT N

Price Benowitz LLP  
409 7th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20004

February 5, 2021

RE: Character Letter for Peter Debbins

My name is Maria S. Schweikert [REDACTED]

Peter was my student at the University of Minnesota where I taught Russian Language and Culture. Peter was in my class between 1993 (if I remember it correctly) and 1997. That year, I wrote an evaluation for him to continue his studies at the Graduate School. In my 24 years at the UofM I had many students. I remember Peter as someone who was always upbeat, and eager to learn.

Academic background:

I have a 5 year degree in Russian and Bulgarian languages and literatures from the ELTE University in Budapest, Hungary. In 5 years, besides the languages, we covered different subjects, i.e. history of the countries of study, culture, Slavic linguistics, teaching methodology, psychology, logic, and other areas relating to those countries. The material covered more areas than what I had in Graduate School at University of Pittsburgh, PA where in December of 1974 I received my MA degree in Russian and Bulgarian Literatures and Languages. In Budapest, at the end of our studies, every student had to write a thesis on a literary topic in one of the languages.

In Budapest, after graduating I worked as interpreter and translator for different government officials, academic, technical, artistic, etc. delegations using Hungarian, Bulgarian and Russian languages. In Hungary, I also learned English. I came to the US in 1971 for a short visit with my mother to see her cousin and her ailing aunt. 4 hours after we landed in New York, my mother fell down on concrete steps, suffered a massive head injury, and died. This changed my life. I stayed in the US. Since I came already speaking English, I could be a productive member of society. I continued working as interpreter and translator for a company in Pittsburgh.

I taught at different colleges in Minneapolis and St. Paul, MN. (total of 36 years, of which 24 years I taught at the U. of M.). One positive result of growing up in Ukraine and going to Russian school is that even today my Russian is on native level, and I can speak Ukrainian as well, although I am a bit rusty since I don't use it actively..

My very short biography:

I have to mention one more historic reality. We lived in the Eastern part of Hungary which, in 1944, was "liberated" by the Soviet troops (in other words, the Hungarian and the ethnic Rusyn population found themselves in Ukraine not by their choice). Many people were taken to the Soviet Labor camps as POW-s, including my father, who was a Hungarian officer in the Hungarian Army before the Soviets took over that part of Hungary, so at not even 1 yr of age, I lost my father who spent almost 12 years in the Soviet Gulag (the USSR's State run labor camps). Our many years of prayers had been answered, and after Stalin's death many

- 2 -

prisoners, who survived the harsh Siberian winters and the heavy labor, had been freed by the Soviet government during Chairman Malenkov's short time as head of the USSR. Finally, my mother and I could repatriate to Hungary and reunite with my father at the end of 1956 (after the Hungarian Revolution, which was crushed by the Soviet troops.). As a 13-yr-old teenager I was shocked to see Budapest with badly damaged buildings, bridges, and torn up roads, it looked like a place which just went through a war.

I experienced discrimination not once, not twice when living in Ukraine due to border changes, and in socialist Hungary because of the family I was born into: my mother was a teacher but could not get a job in her field because her father, my grandfather, was a Byzantine (Eastern) Catholic priest (in Europe the Eastern Catholic clergy can be married), and her husband, my father was a Hungarian officer before the Soviets came into Hungary and "liberated" us. My grandfather was poisoned in the hospital by a KGB agent masquerading as "nurse". Many other priests were killed by different methods, among them my great uncle, and another relative of mine who was a bishop.

#### How do I remember Peter?

Since Peter's mother was from Ukraine, Peter and I found a common language. The Ukrainian and the Russian language and culture got Peter interested. In class, I talked about the Russian and Ukrainian schools, and customs in general. Students were asking many questions, and it kept their interest in the subject. Peter was very interested about my experiences in Ukraine, Russia, and Hungary. Born to a Ukrainian mother, he heard stories from her, too. I have to mention that the Ukrainians are not fans of the Russians and of being ruled by Moscow. The socialist and communist ideology had to be tolerated by all the 15 republics which made up the Soviet Union. In 1991 the Soviet Union fell apart. It took them over 70 years. The process of awakening started in 1985 by Gorbachov's (not -e- like it is referred to in English) Perestroika (which means "restructuring and reforming the economic and political system") and Glasnost' (meaning "letting your opinion heard", in other words "free speech"). Well, as we know, Putin is trying to slowly bring back the old system, and punishing the people who do not agree with some of his views...People are being jailed (journalists were - and are - imprisoned, killed by different methods, disappeared, etc. The most prominent case is Alexei Navalny's.) There are revolts from different Russian groups in different cities against Putin's policies.

As I mentioned before, Peter's sister was my neighbor in MN. I saw Peter and his Russian wife maybe once, or twice. As a student of Russian language, Peter traveled to Russia (I think he took a Russian language course there) to Chelyabinsk, where he met his future wife. She is a very nice young woman whom later (before or after his graduation) he married in Russia, and they have 4 children together. He is a very good family man, good father, who provides for them (I heard only positive opinions about him). He takes interest in their upbringing. Peter and his wife go back to Russia quite often to visit his wife's family. I cannot imagine Peter working against the US. If anything, he would talk to them about his great country of which he is proud. He fondly talked about his family. He wanted to serve the US like his father did during the Korean war in 1950-s. Peter was proud to be in the university's ROTC program. I am positive that he is a productive member of society. If he felt that it was important to serve in the armed forces, that is an indicator that he wanted to serve his country. Peter likes to joke and he may have said something that was misunderstood.

- 3 -

Peter told me about his mother being in a German camp after she left Ukraine, at the end of WWII, when so many Eastern Europeans fled their homeland and sought refuge in foreign countries. Ukrainians do not care for Russians because of being considered by the Russians as second rate citizens. The Russians forget that there was a Kievan Rus' (Kiev is Ukraine's capital) and the Ukrainians are very apprehensive that the Russians forget that part of the history. So, I don't think for a moment that Peter's mother was bringing up her children talking much about her supposed love for the Russian State. Mrs. Debbins, referred to the US as the country offering freedom. I had the same sentiments towards the US, since I also lived behind the Iron Curtain... I know the ills of living under Moscow's ruling (that's why the Hungarian Revolution took place in 1956, after which Hungary was a much better country. The 15 Soviet Republics had to use Russian language before their own. My family and all the Hungarians whose homeland became part of the Soviet Ukraine had to learn Russian, the official language of the USSR. There were some elementary nationality schools (i.e. there was a Hungarian school in the city where I grew up, but only for grades 1-7, and after that it would have been difficult to switch to Russian, so I went to Russian kindergarten and school from the beginning). The official language for the entire USSR was Russian. Well, as fate would have it, in the middle of 7th grade, when we reunited with my father in Hungary, I had to switch to Hungarian language, and that was not easy after studying in Russian...

As to Peter's kindness or good deeds, I am sure his mother taught her children good manners. Hospitality, generosity is an inner quality for Eastern Europeans. When someone just drops by, they are invited inside, and treated like their own family. They are offered tea, coffee, or cookies. There is a saying in Eastern Europe about hospitality that so-and-so would have given the last shirt of his back to help someone. When someone says about a not hospitable person that he/she "did not offer even a glass of water"... that is considered to be a very negative characterization of the people who did not show kindness towards the unexpected guest.

Peter demonstrates his peaceful nature towards his family and friends. He was very friendly toward his college friends and classmates. Some students could be rather critical about some things, and let other people know about their opinion in a rude way. I remember having one student in one of my classes who was abrasive towards the rest of the class, and even toward the professor. Peter does not fall into that category of people.

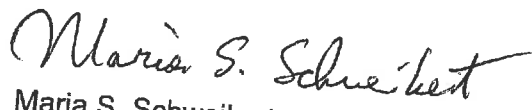
I have difficulty believing that Peter could have been acting or talking against his comrades in the military, or betrayed his country. If anything, I could imagine that he would talk to Russians about some of his conservative views in hope that he could help them to see the good side of the American society. I am sure that he and the rest of my students remember the stories I told them about my negative experiences while growing up in the Soviet socialist/communist system. Here is one example: I was in 3rd grade, when on Mondays I was summoned by our school director (in the US it is called the principle) to her office informing me that they saw me in church on Sunday, and that there was no God, etc. etc. We had to stop going to church, instead we had a priest friend convert one of their 3 rooms in the house into a small chapel, and that's where we gathered for church services. Yes, spying was very much normal for the 50s Soviet Union...

I hope this will shine some light on Peter's true good character. I don't believe Peter Debbins would say anything that was not already mentioned in papers, or news, or other sources. People used to be able to talk about their views frankly. (I am concerned about the present reality in the US whereas if one person has

-4-

different views from the other or a group of people participating in conversation or discussion, it makes the news...). I believe Peter's character is basically good despite hearing about his conviction.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maria S. Schweikert".

Maria S. Schweikert, retired teacher of Russian language